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W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Secretary-General says those who withhold funding from UN then claim it is ineffective are being dishonest.

* Secretary-General holds talks in London with Prime Minister John Major on UN's financial crisis and world's trouble spots.

* UNFPA expresses concern over allegations of abuses and neglect in Chinese orphanages.

* European Union signs financing agreement for deployment of human rights monitors in Burundi.

* WFP airlifts food to 600,000 refugees in Sierra Leone after rebels ambush humanitarian road convoys.

* WHO makes gains towards a polio-free world.

* UNDP and Guyana sign agreement on sustainable human development initiatives.

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There is a certain dishonesty on the part of those who, by denying funding, make the United Nations ineffective, then say they are withholding funding because it is ineffective, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Addressing a meeting in London today, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the first General Assembly session, he said the Organization was being weakened by Member States' apparent inability to follow through on decisions and their failure to provide the means to make their commitments real.

The Secretary-General said greater frankness about the current situation was needed. Despite strong political support for the United Nations, multilateralism and the comprehensive approach outlined in the Charter, the Organization's effectiveness was being corroded from within, because it was being denied the means to do its job properly. The morale of its most precious asset, its staff, was being sapped, he said.

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The Secretary-General noted that challenges today were not as clear cut as the Nazi aggression and militarism which the world faced fifty years ago. However, some threats such as environmental catastrophes, the dangers of pandemics like AIDS, or international terrorism were global and affected all States. The world had asked the United Nations to handle those problems, without giving it the military, political or financial means. He called for a mobilization against new threats and urged the international community to make genocide and ethnic cleansing as unthinkable as Nazi aggression.

Earlier, at the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the first General Assembly session, the Secretary-General said the United Nations had solved disputes and helped bring peace, development and democracy to every continent. It had successfully overseen, with relatively little bloodshed, the decolonization agenda. The protection of human rights had been immeasurably enhanced through the United Nations, which had also forcefully articulated the struggle against apartheid, the case for the Palestinians and the debate about development.

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The Secretary-General held discussions in London today with British Prime Minister John Major on the world's trouble spots, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and the situations in Eastern Slavonia, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to a United Nations spokesman, they also discussed the financial crisis facing the United Nations and the possibility of convening a special session of the General Assembly to address the Organization's acute monetary problems.

The Secretary-General will leave for Paris tonight to attend ceremonies for the late French President, Francois Mitterrand, who died earlier this week. He will return to London on Saturday to chair talks on East Timor, which are scheduled to begin 16 January.

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The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) says it is deeply concerned about reports in the world media that girl children had been systematically abused and neglected in state orphanages in China. In a statement issued today, Executive Director, Dr. Nafis Sadik, said the UNFPA strongly supported respect for human rights in whatever context they were raised.

The UNFPA was especially concerned with reproductive rights and health, and respect for the autonomy and equality of women and girls, Dr. Sadik said. The reports about girl children were troubling and the charges needed to be substantiated. The UNFPA was asking the Chinese authorities for clarification on the issues raised.

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The European Union has signed a financing agreement to fund the deployment of human rights monitors in Burundi. The agreement, which was signed yesterday, is worth some $518,000 and will fund observers from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for three and a half months. The first contingent of five observers will be deployed in Bujumbura as soon as contributions are

received. Depending on security conditions and funding, up to 35 observers will reinforce the operation, first in the capital and gradually throughout the country.

The High Commissioner's office in Bujumbura, which opened in June 1994, is not funded through the Organization's regular budget. It aims to help prevent and limit human rights violations and inter-ethnic violence. The observers are mandated to bring cases of alleged violence to the attention of authorities, recommend remedial action and follow up on developments. They also have a crucial information and fact-finding role.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has begun airlifting food into war-torn eastern and southern Sierra Leone after rebels ambushed relief convoys. According to WFP field workers, getting food to more than 600,000 displaced people in the region has become a security nightmare since rebel attacks against the convoys escalated dramatically in recent weeks.

The situation has reached crisis proportions with WFP warehouses in the affected areas almost emptied. The Agency fears malnutrition will reach frightening levels and has asked the Government to provide dedicated military convoys to escort humanitarian deliveries. More than one third of Sierra Leone's population of 4 million -- some 1.5 million people -- are displaced and desperate for food. The most needy are women, children and the elderly.

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Nearly half the world's children under 5 years of age, in 51 countries, received supplementary immunization against poliomyelitis last year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Special vaccination campaigns, known as national immunization days, are an important part of the Agency's polio eradication strategy. The disease has already been eliminated in the Americas where the last case was reported in Peru in 1991. The WHO estimates an additional $500 million will be needed to eradicate the disease by the year 2000.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Guyanese officials have signed an agreement to work together to design and carry out sustainable human development initiatives. They will prepare a national report which will spell out the country's key development challenges and guide the Government in the follow-up commitments it made at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen last March. In 1995, Guyana ranked 105th out of the 174 countries on the UNDP's human development index.

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